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RAIL TRAVEL NEWS

80¢

VOL. 13 NO. 24
DECEMBER 1983
ISSUE NO. 282

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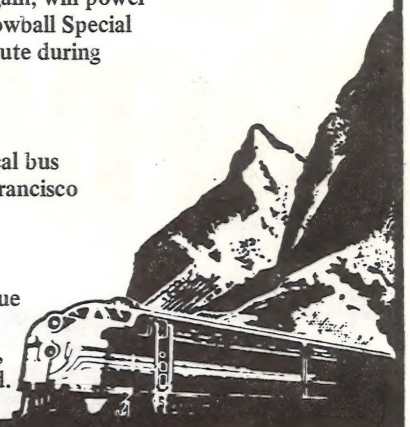

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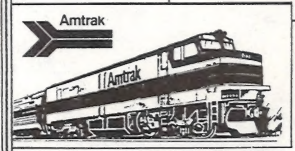

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Rail Travel News, Vol. 13, No. 24. December, 1983. Whole number 282.

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Published twice monthly by Message Media, P.O. Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. Subscription $19.00 per year; single copy 80¢. Overseas and institutional rates on request. STAFF: James Russell, Editor. Paul Rayton, Editor-at-Large. Regional Correspondents: Peter Putnam Bretz, Jack Ferry, Adron Hall, Kenneth Maylath, Peter Roehm, Ted Scull.

ON THE COVER

See "Train of the Year," pages 12-13, for identification of our cover photo. Photo by Paul Rayton.

LETTERS

In recent months I have read with considerable alarm a growing number of negative letters concerning such topics as Amtrak's failure to continue the SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA, initiate new trains, maintain service to Wyoming, as well as, reductions in station services. As a frequent rail traveler, I also have concerns about various aspects of Amtrak service and decision which seem to compromise this service. However, I ask that those who criticize many of Amtrak's decisions be reminded of the following:

*Amtrak existence depends on Congress, whose willingness to support such programs is tenuous.

* The current lull in the efforts to cut domestic spending programs will end shortly after the 1984 election.

I recently had the opportunity to attend a meeting which was addressed by Senator Peter Wilson of California. Senator Wilson indicated that it is quite possible that the balanced budget amendment to the Constitution will be enacted by the mid-1980s. This would certainly result in extensive spending cuts.

I would ask rail advocates to consider whether modest cost-cutting measures taken today might head off another major attack on Amtrak's existence in the future. As I see it, the best thing that Amtrak has in its favor is that it has brought costs under control. I hope that Amtrak can now be viewed by legislators as an example of a government-supported agency which is not always asking for more and more money to do its work.

Does this mean reducing some station services? Does this mean that we cannot have trains running everywhere we would like them to go? The best long-range answer to these questions is probably yes. I do not endorse everything that Amtrak does. I do admire Amtrak's management for making some hard decisions which may be best for Amtrak in the long term. Amtrak's survival may depend on it.

Mark S. Becker
Richton Park, Illinois

(RTN disagrees with this philosophy. It has always been RTN's opinion that the more we demonstrate our need for more and better train service, the more and better train service we will get. If we who love and use trains do not press for more and better service, who will? The highway establishment would like to have all the money that Amtrak gets. All the government cost-cutters in Washington would like to have Amtrak cut back or eliminated. If we as train supporters join their voices and say "Okay, cut back station services; cut back some routes; cut back the quality of on-board services" we are only joining forces with the enemy, and we will end up with no more rail passenger service. How does the defense establishment get all it wants?—certainly not by going to Congress and saying, "we want to survive, so we're willing to cut back to a minimum of missiles," etc. —Editor.)

Gee, thanks to Mr. John A. Mills to Topeka KS for his proposal (RTN 280) that the SP main line between Houston, San Antonio, Del Rio and El Paso be deprived of the passenger service it has supported for the past 100 years.

He proposed to use the same trains to provide both north-south and east-west service. This "rob Peter to pay Paul" scheme sends the SUNSET LIMITED, which now at least has a direct route, wandering around Texas the way the EAGLE does. Running time between New Orleans and Los Angeles would be increased by more than several hours.

Mr. Mills has some good ideas but they fail to address the basic problem.

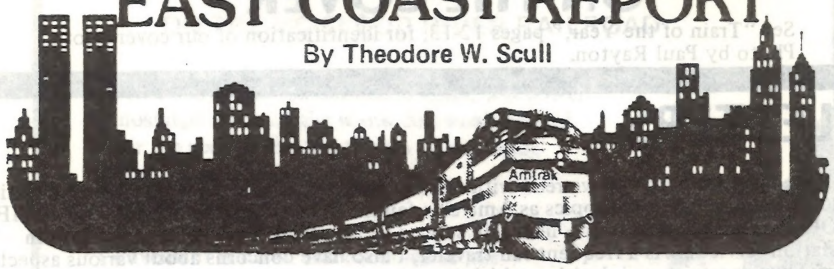
Texas has 26 metropolitan cities (Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas) including three of the 10 largest cities in the U.S. It is 801 miles across in the greatest generally north-south distance and 773 miles east to west.

It is simply too large in both population and area to serve adequately with two trains running on tri-weekly schedules.

(continued on page 7)

EAST COAST REPORT

By Theodore W. Scull



During a one-issue absence from these pages, I renewed my acquaintance with Amtrak's long distance trains on a 6-day transcontinental itinerary and arrived home exhilarated by the experience.

While nearly every Act of God and man beset the COAST STARLIGHT on a much-troubled trip from Oakland to Portland, the Feather River Canyon detour and the considerable efforts of the on-board crew made up for the long delays.

From Portland to Chicago the PIONEER/CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR combination now takes an easy first place in my list of great American rail journeys because of the route's rich variety of scenery. The Columbia River Gorge, the Blue Mountains with numerous herds of elk, Soldier Summit, the rest of the lengendary action-packed Rio Grande line and the nighttime "aerial" descent into Denver puts the trip in the category of a true land cruise.

From Chicago to New York, with a stopover in Albany, the LAKE SHORE was about as perfect as an overnight train trip could get, and altho I grew up on the Pennsy, I now have to admit that the BROADWAY is no longer number one.

During the journey I encountered not one single rude Amtrak employee, rode trains that were mostly on time (except for the first leg), and with a careful menu selection, enjoyed most of my dining car meals in a pleasant and well-run atmosphere.

★★★

On Dec 16 the Board of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority announced average fare and toll increases of 20% on its subways, buses, commuter trains, bridges and tunnels. The vote was 9 to 3 with one abstention.

The new fares are expected to bring in an additional $270 million a year. The increases were met with noisy protests at MTA headquarters, and some of the demonstrators had to be removed to allow the proceedings to continue.

The New York City bus and subway fare will rise 15 cents on Jan 2, from the current 75 cents to 90 cents. As a small concession, the elderly and handicapped will be able to ride the system for half fare 24 hours a day, whereas for the last few years these two groups had to pay full fare during the 7-9am rush hours. The return fare coupon is now good for three days instead of only one.

Whether the present transit token will remain in use will be determined by the amount of hoarding that the riders practice in the interim. Since my return to the city, I have made occasional extra stops at token booths. The Transit Authority has a stock of 40 million older tokens that were withdrawn at the time of the 1980 fare increase. If they are needed, the cost of altering the turnstiles is estimated to be about $100,000.

On the Metro-North and Long Island commuter lines, the average fare increase is 20% and takes effect one minute after midnight on Jan 1. One concession here is a new 25% reduction in the one-way off-peak fare. In the past, the cut-rate tickets have been available only upon purchase of a round trip when both journeys were made in off-peak periods.

The fares on the Metro-North lines across the Hudson will change only after NJ Transit, with whom the MTA has joint operations, makes it move in February.

Tolls on four bridges and two tunnels operated by the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority, an MTA subsidiary, will rise from $1.25 to $1.50 on Jan 3. These profitable crossings help subsidize the mass transit lines. Three other, shorter bridge tolls will remain at 90 cents.

MTA express bus fares rise from $2.50 to $3.00.

The sad tale of rapidly rising costs since World War II can best be demonstrated by reviewing the fare hikes which have come at increasingly shorter intervals. The initial fare of one nickel remained in effect for the first 44 years of service from 1904 to 1948, when the fare doubled to 10 cents. Five years later, in 1953, the fare rose 50% to 15 cents, where it remained constant until 1966. The 20-cent token stayed in effect for only four years, and in 1970 the fare went up another 50% to 30 cents. Then in only two years (1972) it moved up to 35 cents, and in another three years (1975) to 50 cents. The 60-cent fare came in 1980 and the next year (1981) it climbed to 75 cents, then 2½ years later reached its present 90-cent level.

Fare increases, deteriorating service, fear of crime, unemployment and a declining urban population has brought the number of annual riders down to the 1917 figures. Unlike some of the area's commuter lines, the MTA makes virtually no effort to encourage ridership thru advertising or promotions. Some observers hope that the new MTA Chairman Robert Kiley might change all that.

★★★

Kawasaki Heavy Industries' new 10-car $1 million subway train began running test services on the East Side and West Side IRT lines on Nov 29. The R-62 graffiti-resistant cars, specially built for the narrow ITR Division tunnels, are part of a 325-car order that will be delivered over the next 14 months.

Within hours after New York City Mayor Ed Koch rode the first run, two teenage brothers were arrested for using black magic marker pens to write "Ace" and "Fred loves Mo" inside one of the new cars.

The incident gave some extra attention to the mayor's call for a transit court to prosecute graffiti vandals, farebeaters and other offenders for what are called "quality of life" crimes. The new civil court would treat the offenses like traffic violations with fixed fines, and unpaid tickets would be assigned to a collection agency.

By the end of 1983, transit police officers will have handed out 375,000 summonses, an incredible 60% of the total criminal court load. However, 86% of the offenders never appear in court, and even the farebeaters who do appear rarely receive fines of more than a few dollars because the majority of the overworked judges do not see these crimes as serious offenses.

★★★

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority, in an advertisement in the New York Times, called for proposals to develop restaurants in three little-used spaces at the balcony level of Grand Central Terminal overlooking the main concourse. Already there is one highly popular bar and light-meal restaurant at the Vanderbilt Avenue end.

The additional spaces are on the left side of the west balcony facing Vanderbilt and to the left and right of the escalators leading up to the Pan Am Building. The notice emphasizes that more than one-half million commuters, tourists and office workers pass thru the terminal every day.

The present restaurant, in my view, does not spoil the magnificent Beaux-Arts interior, but rather adds more life to what was once vacant space. The present operation is without doubt more attractive than the most unfortunate-looking jungle/fountain display ad for Salem cigarettes of a few years back.

But before the MTA does anything else, they should give immediate attention to the scandalous conditions in the terminal's public restrooms. The men's room, especially, is absolutely disgraceful.

★★★

Philadelphia's venerable 30th Street Station celebrated its 50th anniversary beginning Dec 15 with official ceremonies and a Holiday Rail Roadshow spread over three days. The station, a soaring Art Deco masterpiece completed at the time of the Pennsylvania Railroad's electrification of its New York-Washington corridor, has even during periods of deferred maintenance always kept its quiet dignity and made travelers feel important when they arrived by train or from the street. Improvements, especially in the station's rather low standard of retail services, will be monitored as they occur. I'll decide whether the newly-opened McDonald's is in the category of an improvement when I see –but not necessarily patronize–it over Christmas.

★★★

The 7-year old Washington Metro has been much in the news of late, including a series of four articles in the Washington Post on neighborhoods served by the system. In the second article, the Yellow Line's King Street Station opening in Alexandria

on Dec 17 was featured. The story described how the transit line has created a building boom in a previously stagnant commercial area next to Amtrak's newly-refurbished rail passenger station. Real estate developers and business people are eager to profit from the planned further extensions, and heated controbersy exists about which additional lines will be built first.

Travel times between the end of the 9-mile Yellow line and downtown Washington will drop from an hour by bus or car to only 24 minutes on the Metro.

In a related article in the Post, Metro's general manager Carmen Turner asked the Reagan Administration to allow completion of the entire proposed 101-mile system to avoid further delays and therefore higher costs. Present restrictions call for only 76.4 miles, tho Metro officials say that funds already authorized by Congress would allow an 86.6-mile network to be finished.

To accommodate holiday riders and shoppers, the Metro transit authority authorized the extension of Sunday service by one hour to 7pm on three consecutive weekends in December. On the Thanksgiving weekend, trains ran until 10:30pm for the benefit of travelers using Union Station and National Airport. For a New Yorker, it is difficult to imagine a major urban transit system that would not operate until at least midnight every day of the week.

★★★

The Dec 11 Sunday Travel Section of the New York Daily News carried a substantial and carefully-researched Amtrak story written by financial reporter John Henry, on riding the Empire Corridor between New York and his native town of Buffalo. Mr. Henry, a personal friend who knows the route as well as anyone, describes the state's fine, and some of its bleak, scenery that can best be appreciated thru the window of a moving train.

Much of the article is a fascinating route guide that captures the essence of the eight-hour trip—a modern-day version of the former New York Central's prized "Magic Windows" booklet. He helps the traveler decide whether to make the trip by fairly describing the level of service, giving the fares, departure times and

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Amtrak makes getting to the middle of New York City easy as pie, with eight convenient trains a day to Grand Central Station from Albany, and six from Schenectady.

Amtrak's New York telephone number.

Altho Mr. Henry normally chooses to fly to and from Buffalo because of the time factor and People Express's lower fares, he obviously likes to keep in touch with the Water Level Route, where at night you can sleep but during the day you have the opportunity to feast on the varied landscape of the Empire State.

★★★

On Sunday, Dec 18 two members of the SS "Canberra's" crew were in town on leave, and they asked me to take them for a trip on the New York City subway. I could not have planned two more contrasting trips.

At 59th Street and Columbus Circle a relatively-clean IND "A" train swept into the station just as we reached the platform. It then sped northward on the system's longest, regular-fare non-stop run to 125th Street, and two stops later at 168th Street we got off to switch to the southbound Broadway Local on the older IRT Division.

The transfer led us along twisting, narrow corridors to a recalcitrant elevator descent to a vaulted station that leaked water even on this fine sunny day. After a long wait we boarded a newspaper-strewn lead car with walls that were entirely covered in peeling graffiti, had a potholed floor, missing maps, two stuck doors, unintelligible announcements and a passenger who relieved himself between cars as the train stopped at a red signal on its way over the high trestle near 125th Street.

The two natives of London said after the ride that they felt they had seen New York. Happy New Year!

LETTERS

(continued from page 3)

Interestingly, the plans proposed by both Mr. Mills and Mr. Duane W. Roller (RTN 279) call for restoring service over lines served by premiere streamlined trains in pre-Amtrak days.

Mr. Roller would send Amtrak's EAGLE over the route MoPac used for its TEXAS EAGLE between Longview, Palestine and San Antonio.

Great, but why stop there? Why not also restore the old TEXAS EAGLE segment between Palestine and Houston? This would give the South's largest city direct service to St. Louis and Chicago.

Mr. Mills wants to run New Orleans to Dallas. Why detour via Houston? The former T&P line via Marshall and Longview can provide the EAGLE link direct to Dallas.

Both Mr. Roller and Mr. Mills want to restore the former TEXAS EAGLE route over the old T&P between Dallas/Fort Worth and El Paso. This is the logical place for the EAGLE to meet the SUNSET. It is where the connections were made in pre-Amtrak days.

Dallas and Fort Worth can use direct service to the West Coast without taking the extra day for a detour via San Antonio. This does not, it is important to emphasize, reduce the need Houston and San Antonio have for direct service to the West.

Unfortunately, we cannot expect Amtrak to provide the trains needed for a viable service anytime soon. However, revising the routes is not the answer. Unless you have enough plugs for all the holes in a leaky boiler, you can move them around all you want, but the steam will still escape from the holes left uncovered.

Any alleged weakness in ridership of the SUNSET LIMITED is not the fault of the route, or even of the intense airline competition which Amtrak Marketing finds so convenient to cite. Of far greater significance is the woeful inadequacy of the service provided by Amtrak. The present tri-weekly schedules are so poorly conceived as to make Amtrak virtually unusable for most travel within Texas and beyond.

The schedule the SUNSET runs on today is essentially the one SP changed to in the declining days of private operation not as a matter of customer convenience but to permit the train to be consolidated west of El Paso with the Rock Island-SP Chicago-L.A. GOLDEN STATE.

Let's not talk about shuffling around inadequate service. Let's work for customer-oriented DAILY service on existing routes and the addition of new routes to fill the gaps so obvious in the system.

Dan Bus
Del Rio, Texas

RAIL CANADA

ALL LRC COACHES of VIA Rail Canada were removed from service early in December for "complete inspection of wheel bearings and their possible replacement." In a Dec 9 press release, VIA announced that that day it was temporarily pulling all 50 of its LRC coaches. VIA said that manufacturer Bombardier on Dec 8 advised them of the need for inspection. Bombardier's move came after findings of an inspection program triggered by a bearing failure on an LRC coach on Dec 2. Inspection after that incident revealed abnormal wear on some car wheel bearings, VIA said. VIA gave no more particulars on the Dec 2 incident, but RTN has learned from other sources that an LRC train traveling at high speed near Cobourg had a wheel fly off. Another similar incident was said to have occurred later on the Ottawa branch. The Canadian Transport Commission reportedly then ordered the trains removed from service, and evidently found journal boxes fouled or improperly sealed. The sudden decision to remove the cars resulted in many problems at the Montreal coach yard, where stored or retired cars had to be restored to service, some of them missing batteries, etc. The LRCs have experienced other problems in the past, and CN has restricted them to 80mph because of alleged damage to the track. VIA said it was changing all the wheel bearings on its 50 cars, and expected to have them back in servicein time for the Christmas holidays.

VIA AND BOMBARDIER have solved the problems of the hydraulic tilt system on the LRC cars, and retrofitting should be complete by mid-February, according to a Dec 2 report. VIA President Pierre Franche told reporters that the Toronto-Montreal time could be cut to 4hrs, 35mins, a saving of seven minutes. Bombardier is working on a second order of 50 LRC cars for VIA. After that, VIA will consider replacing its transcontinental equipment

LAURENTIANS REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT Council Director Claude Ducharme announced in December that his organization will carry out studies on regional transit. Among other subjects will be the restoration of a commuter train from Ste-Therese to Montreal. This train was abandoned several years ago by CP. It used the famous line of the P'tit Train du Nord.

QUEBEC NATIONAL ASSEMBLY deputy Andre Bourbeau has in an open letter proposed resolution of the regional Metro battle between Transport Minister Michel Clair and city officials, with upgrading of the existing CN "tunnel" electric Deux-Montagnes line instead of its connected east-west line to Pointe-aux-Trembles.

THE SECOND SESSION of the 32nd Parliament opened in December with the Speech from the Throne which included the announcement that a new Canadian rail pass similar to the Eurailpass will be offered, and other discount fares will be initiated as well. The speech also promised upgrading of the VIA system, with construction of new maintenance facilities in Western, Central and Atlantic Canada. New trains are to be developed for "light density routes" and passenger services will be extended "where traffic volume warrants". The maintenance facilities will be located in Montreal, Toronto, Halifax and Winnipeg.

TRANSPORT MINISTER AXWORTHY in a Dec 16 announcement made official the restoration of rail passenger service Winnipeg-Edmonton via Melville, with service to commence in June.

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA transit information for the first time is offered all in one place at the Transbay Terminal in San Francisco. The information center there opened in mid-December. In February a top level conference of heads of the six major transit systems in the Bay Area will meet to discuss coordinating their services. This will mark the first occasion that transit coordination has been considered by these systems in one general meeting. An updated edition of the 1981 Bay Area Regional Transit Guide has just been published and is available at newsstands.

SEPTA HAS INTRODUCED the availability of charge purchasing of its SEPTA Trailpass. Visa or Mastercard can be used to purchase the pass in a semi-self service fashion at SEPTA stations.

SAN FRANCISCO TROLLEY Festival videotapes from this past summer are said to be available from Spaulding Video Sales, 1240 41st Ave, San Francisco CA 94122 at $49.95 for a 2-hr VHS or Beta tape.

NEW JERSEY TRANSIT will discontinue the Phillipsburg trains on the Raritan Valley line as of Dec 30. As a compensation, NJ Transit will add one train each way on weekdays to run as far as High Bridge.

OTTAWA, ONTARIO OPENED new exclusive busways on Dec 11, with a great deal of fanfare. These new roads, much wider than LRT right of way, may save commuters up to 5 or 10 minutes, but at least one of the roads requires 5 minutes of entry time, thus negating some of the savings. Rail spokesmen in the area criticize a "bus-fan" mentality at Regional Transit for the existence of the roads and the non-existence thus far of a light rail transit line in the capitol city.

THE BART SYSTEM had its busiest day ever on Dec 21 when 216,721 passengers rode. BART on-time performance is now about 78%, a spokesman said. In other news, BART will begin talks with San Mateo County officials on a possible new station in the Colma-Serramonte area, altho the county still intends to remain out of the BART District. Three handicapped riders are suing BART for better handicapped access to the transit system. One of the main problems is elevator access, as handicapped riders often wait long periods of time for an agent to activate the elevator. AC Transit is also the subject of this suit.

(continued on page 16)

Cruising to San Francisco

BY WALT STRINGER

There are many ways to travel between Los Angeles and San Francisco. There are about 150 air trips per day, several dozen scheduled buses, and of course Amtrak trains on two routes (one route via bus/train). Motorists can use the boring Interstate 5, the scenic Highway 101, or the spectacular Highway 1 (currently closed until 1984 due to slides below Big Sur). This morning I completed my most unusual trip between the two major California centers—by cruise ship.

American Hawaii Cruises, a three-year-old company based in San Francisco, operates two ships on inter-island weekly cruises in Hawaii. Due to inspection/maintenance requirements, as well as the desire to promote the ships to travel agents on the mainland, the cruise line began running occasional trans-pacific cruises in 1982. I tried to get on the "Independence" last year, but found the $300+ fare prohibitive. This year the cruise line changed its policies, and offered a $99 one-way fare between L.A. and S.F., with "run of the ship" accommodations—meaning you get whatever stateroom they choose to give you. The fare also includes all meals and entertainment on the overnight jaunt. Again I tried to get on the "Independence" for the summer trip, only to find it sold out. Then I was able to confirm space on the December trip of the "Constitution," with stateroom 266 on Main Deck.

The "Constitution" is American-registered and was built in 1951. After seeing service in the North Atlantic-Mediterranean trade (include taking Grace Kelly to her wedding with Prince Rainier in Monaco in April 1956), as well as the Hong Kong-Malaysia cruise market, she was refurbished and entered Hawaii service in 1982.

The "Independence" has a similar history. The ships are nearly 700 feet long, displace over 30,000 tons, can travel 24 knots using four steam turbine engines, and normally carry about 800 riders on nine decks. Obviously, these two sisters have sailed a long way from the Fore River shipyards in Quincy, Massachusetts 32 years ago.

The maritime industry has had an even worse time than passenger rail travel during this century. Once, ships plied every ocean route imaginable, with elegant standards of service. The ability of jet aircraft to cover the oceans in hours took most of the business away, resulting in the end of scheduled ship service, but the beginning of a large scale cruise market—and it is still growing.

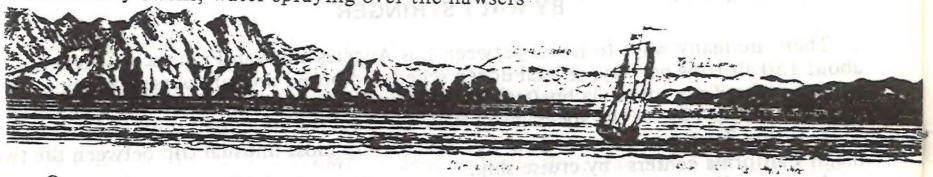
Ironically, you can't ride most ships between U.S. ports due to an old law, the Bacon Act. It says that only American flag ships can serve U.S. intercity travel. Since most cruise ships are registered in foreign countries (usually known as "flags of convenience", due to fewer safety regulations and taxes), only American Hawaii Cruises and Delta Lines (on freight ships) can carry U.S.—U.S. traffic. On foreign ships, one must first transit a foreign port before debarking in the U.S. Altho American Hawaii cruises is financially backed by a wealthy Asian businessman, it is an American flag carrier, and thus we can enjoy its services.

I boarded the "Constitution" about 9am at Pier 198 in Wilmington, the port of L.A. Only about 300 of the 800 who sailed from Honolulu were stillaboard for the last leg to San Francisco. The gangway was lowered promptly at 10am, and tugboat "Point Fermin" pulled us out backwards and escorted us to the Ports of Call Village (near the Catalina Terminal in San Pedro). The pilot dropped off onto the pilot boat "Bahia de Angeles" at the breakwater, and we were off.

Cruise ships feature relaxation, eating, entertainment, drinking, and very attentive service. Since the weather on this December 9 was cloudy with some rain, I grabbed a copy of the 2-page activity sheet, published daily, and did a little of everything, exploring the vessel as I moved about it. When the sun did occasionally appear, it felt wonderful to stand on deck and observe Catalina and the Channel Islands, as well as the mainland in the distance. I thought of the planes, buses, cars and maybe even the STARLIGHT, and what the travelers on them were missing.

The food was excellent—as much as you wanted—and activities in the nine bars and lounges and restaurants ranged from Bingo to an evening floor show with Hawaiian dancers. Also included was a mandatory lifeboat and fire drill. The ship's theater showed a few old films, and the gift shop was open all day. No one swam in the two pools as the water sloshed around, but the small gymnasium did see a few users.

My favorite event was the bridge tour, a chance to see the nerve center of the ship. My keen interest must have been obvious, since the third mate invited me back during his evening watch, where I spent an interesting half hour observing radar scopes, testing the collision avoidance computer system, and playing bow lookout, trying to spot a freighter 12 miles ahead. The crew was enjoying the ship's "feel" in the heavy swells, water spraying over the hawsers



Our route was north via the Santa Barbara Channel and then straight up the coast. The seas became heavy north of Pt. Concepcion, resulting in quite a few Dramamine dispensations by the ship's nurse. (Hawaiian seas are normally quite calm.) We came under the Golden Gate Bridge about 7am, with most passengers on deck cheering and waving. We docked at Pier 35 by 8am, with tugboats "Sea Eagle" and "Willamette Champion" assisting, and after agricultural inspection for the Hawaii passengers, we were off the ship by 9am. The ship would go to Todd Shipyards in San Francisco for annual certification. A San Francisco fireboat had escorted us in, hoses spraying in salute.

In 1984 the "Independence" will sail from L.A. to S.F. on July 7 at 4pm, and the "Constitution" from S.F. to L.A. on Dec 15 at 4pm. The cruise line's number is 800-227-3666. Fares may rise for the 1984 trips.

It was a fascinating voyage, and a reminder of what travel can be when quality is present.

RANDOM THOUGHTS UPON VISITING THE NEW AUTO TRAIN DEPOT

BY JACK M. TURNER

Back in 1975 I rode the original AUTO-TRAIN. At the time, the A-T was at the height of its popularity. Equipment was spotless, there were attractive stewardesses and entertainment on board, and of course plenty of dome seats.

A trip to Disney World in 1976 offered a chance to drive over to the A-T terminal and watch the train depart—still looking good. Subsequent train trips on Amtrak offered chances to see A-T and/or its facilities at Sanford, Lorton, Richmond, Florence, Savannah, and Jacksonville—still looking good. But the Louisville train did not look good from the first time I saw it in Birmingham to the last time, connected to the FLORIDIAN at Thomasville, Georgia. Suddenly, the original AUTO-TRAIN didn't look so good anymore. My final glimpse of the once-great train was a sad sight as it limped past Amtrak's Jacksonville station behind a barely-functioning A-T U36B locomotive and leased Amtrak E unit—a letdown after a fine steam trip behind Chessie's 614 in March, 1981.

Bolstered by Robert C. Clark's comments in past issues of RTN, I decided to check out the AUTO TRAIN of Amtrak on Nov 26 during a visit to Sanford. I would like to share some impressions of the appearance of the new train, facilities, and surroundings.

★★★

The uninitiated may have trouble locating the station until Highway 44 overpass construction is complete. Detour signs, dump trucks, etc., create a maze and obscure the small signs directing one to the station. Once the overpass is complete, it will be a big help, as trains really back traffic up here... Regular Amtrak passenger station still is manned, agent was outside cleaning up platform area... A few passenger cars stand across the main line from station, a few ex-A-T cars being scrapped, others stored, including Milwaukee Skytop-parlor-observation "Dell Rapids," a beautiful car even tho it's "rusting in peace"... Numerous ex-A-T domes, autoracks, a switcher, etc., stand on spur tracks east of the Amtrak and A-T terminals; most are rusting badly and suffer broken windows, etc., from vandalism... Washer still in same location adjacent to these spurs as it was for original A-T... Appearance of AUTO TRAIN facility since Amtrak took over is very nice; everything freshly painted (even bumper post at end of siding near station)... Too bad adjacent property at turnoff from Highway 44 to AUTO TRAIN facility is undeveloped, as it is overgrown and unsightly... Amtrak personnel very cordial when asked if I could visit and shoot some photos... Visitor parking set aside for such occasions, plus for folks seeing someone off on A-T... Station looks same as under A-T, but is too small for passengers waiting for automobiles to be off-loaded southbound...

Few northbound passengers today, but must be heavy load southbound tomorrow, as 18 passenger cars and 21 automobiles aboard... Had to wait 15 minutes to see someone arrive and have car loaded onto train... Three Vista-domes well-spaced on train; will they stay when full domes arrive?... Poor souls in front sleeper have to walk thru eight cars to reach buffet car, while last coach riders need only to thru five cars... 2220-series 11-double bedroom sleepers were formerly 6-double bedroom, 5-compartment cars; wonder if they are different now?... Why are sleeper names removed on many Amtrak sleepers while "Grove" series cars were recently named by Amtrak? These were nameless under SP. Names are a nice touch... Only two P30 engines used now to power train... Switching of autoracks now being done by RS3 switchers 106 and 107... No caboose or "rider car" on rear of train, as was the case for the old A-T... Bi-level racks are 9000 series, tri-levels are 9100's... Racks go on rear of train northbound... Robert Clark was right: new highway overpass great vantage point until it's complete. Guess whom I met while up there taking pictures? None other than Mr. Clark himself.

DENVER WEATHER AND THE CAL ZEPHYR

The Thanksgiving weekend storm gave Midwesterners their first taste of winter. During the height of the storm on Nov 27, Rio Grande delivered Amtrak train 6, the CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR, into Denver 30 minutes early! Station personnel then got the train out on time. However, Burlington Northern hadn't gotten a mile out of the station when the rear truck of the last car, a sleeper, derailed. The raging storm hampered efforts to rerail the car. After three hours of trying, the crew transferred passengers from the derailed sleeper to other cars. The derailed car was then uncoupled and left behind.

Burlington Northern engine 5798, a U-30-B type, was on the point of a 10-hour late Amtrak train 5, the CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR, into Denver on Nov 28. The other Amtrak engines are numbers 295 and 364, both F40's. The train was held at Hastings NE due to blizzard conditions. The train is shown crossing the S. Platte River bridge. The train is being wyed so it can back into Denver Union Terminal. Photo by Chip Sherman.

Train 5, the westbound CZ, due to arrive Denver at 7am on Nov 28, was ten hours late. BN held the train at Hastings NE due to the raging blizzard. BN put on one of their U-30-B engines to assist the train to Denver. Rio Grande then put on one of their GP-40-2's and continued west at 4:55pm.

Thru most of November and December, the CZ over the Rio Grande has been using only two F40 engines. Rio Grande in August required Amtrak to use three engines between Denver and Salt Lake City when the train was at its maximum length—14 cars. The train has been operating with 13 cars. —Chip Sherman.

train of the year

RTN's annual Train of the Year award for 1983 goes to the SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA.

Each year the editors of RTN select the most outstanding train that in their opinion has contributed most to American rail travel, whether thru such means as patron interest, increased ridership or some innovation that promotes better rail travel. In this case, as with the five Hit-List trains in 1979, the interest aroused among rail travelers was due to the discontinuance of the train under highly controversial conditions.

(This is RTN's eighth annual award. Previous awards were: 1976—LAKE SHORE LIMITED; 1977—PIONEER; 1978—SOUTHERN CRESCENT; 1979—Five Hit-List trains [FLORIDIAN, HILLTOPPER, LONE STAR, NATIONAL LIMITED and NORTH COAST HIAWATHA]; 1980—Heritage Fleet trains [LAKE SHORE LIMITED, BROADWAY LIMITED and CRESCENT]; 1981—CARDINAL; and 1982 RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR.)

CALL IT DEAD. At the inaugural run of the SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA on Oct 22, 1981, numerous officials and politicians including Amtrak's Clark Tyler (left) turned out to revel in the publicity surrounding the new train's startup. But were these officials on hand at the last run to explain to the public the bungling, negativism and inaction that allowed this much-needed service to go down the drain? The inability of Amtrak and Caltrans to agree on a name for the train from the outset did not bode well for the new run. The name was not announced until two months later—mid-December. Still another month of the train's 23-month life fled by before Los Angeles station officials were notified of the name so they could put up a sign. Advertising was practically non-existent. Rail supporters were forced to take matters into their own hands and seek donations to run some limited advertising after a little more than a year of bureaucratic inaction. Surprisingly, these ads got results, and ridership began to climb. But it was too late to halt the bureaucratic wheels that ground the service into oblivion. Rail supporters could have acted sooner, but they were seriously misled by promises from Amtrak's Washington headquarters that special promotions for the train would be enacted. However, there followed nothing but a dead silence from Amtrak headquarters, and on Sep 30, 1983 the train made its last runs.

The Los Angeles-Bay Area-Sacramento overnight SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA began operation on Oct 22, 1981 with a two-day daylight inaugural run to Southern California from Sacramento. Ever since the discontinuance of the SP's LARK in 1967, rail supporters had been pressing to restore overnight service on this important route, one of the most heavily-traveled corridors in the nation. There are scores of airline flights daily in each direction, and many bus departures. But most travel along the corridor is by automobile, and it is to that market that overnight train service could readily appeal.

In spite of the enormous existing market for this service, however, Amtrak and Caltrans managed to botch things and let the service fall by the wayside, even after successfully weathering a number of years of difficult negotiations with the Southern Pacific to get the service established in the first place. Not the least of the causes of the train's demise, of course, was the vicious opposition of incoming Governor Deukmejian's forces to any non-highway projects initiated under former Caltrans director Adriana Gianturco. Highway men in the state had been seething for some years because of Gianturco's forthright efforts to hold back the freeway monster in California by refusing to begin highway projects that she considered unnecessary, and by emphasizing instead a number of rail and transit projects. As a result, Deukmejian's pro-highway crew was all ready even before the vote counting was completed, to begin attacking the most vulnerable of these rail projects.

The SPIRIT debacle has had a major impact on rail politics on the West Coast, where supporters remain outraged by the experience, and it could lead to efforts to decentralize Amtrak and establish a Western Division of the corporation in order to place high-ranking officials on the scene where they can be more closely involved in Western passenger rail needs.

(Photo above:) On the last southbound SPIRIT, rail supporters placed a sign on the lead engine, reading "So Long, SPIRIT, We Will Miss You." The train is seen here before its Sacramento departure. Photo on page 12 was taken at Davis. Both photos by Ted and Sylvia Blishak.

ON THE COVER

The third-to-last southbound run of the SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA. On the morning of Sep 28, 1983, train 15 passes Burbank Junction, where the line from the Coast Route joins that from the San Joaquin Valley. Photo by Paul Rayton.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

The staff of Rail Travel News wishes to take this opportunity to wish you and yours the best of good wishes for the new year.

Our Christmas greeting was inadvertently omitted from our last issue; however, we hope that our cover picture conveyed the message nonverbally.

To the Shores of Hudson's Bay

BY DUANE W. ROLLER

I woke up on another planet. It could not be Earth. The scene outside the window of my sleeping car was bleak and desolate. There were no trees—only a low scrub and swampy wetlands. A clammy mist covered everything and made the terrain colorless and ghostly. A few dirty patches of snow lay on the ground.

But I was indeed on earth, riding the northernmost sleeping car line in the Western Hemisphere. In a few minutes we would arrive Churchill, on Hudson's Bay, and the scene outside my window was a May morning in the sub-Arctic desert. My journey had begun 36 hours previously amidst the prairie silos of Winnipeg. Now, almost exactly 1000 miles to the north, I had reached Canada's famous Arctic seaport, linked with the rest of the world by this rail line, constructed in the 1920s.

Few railroad journeys in North America begin so ordinarily and end so exotically as VIA Rail's HUDSON BAY train, which runs tri-weekly between Winnipeg and Churchill. Armed with a Canrailpass, probably the best travel bargain in North America, I had come from Ontario to try the longest line in Canada I had never ridden. My trip had included the Maritimes and would continue west to Calgary—all for $250.

The HUDSON BAY, which received passengers on track 4 of Winnipeg's attractive CN station, was quite unprepossessing. Only six cars: baggage, express, two coaches, diner-lounge, and sleeper. The only thing out of the ordinary was the presence of two steam generator cars, indicating that even in May CN and VIA were taking no chances with their most remote operation. Only 25 people boarded the train, and in fact the passenger load never went over 70. I learned that May was an in-between season: in summer, up to four sleepers and first class lounge are often operated.

The HUDSON BAY is really three trains in one. The first leg, overnight 483 miles to The Pas (pronounced The PAH), is a prairie local, perhaps the last one left. It serves a variety of small towns and one small city, Dauphin, but would have long since been discontinued were it not for the need to get the equipment back and forth to Winnipeg. The daytime section, 231 miles from The Pas to Thompson, serves remote Indian villages and fishing camps, much like the trains in northern Ontario. But the third section, 341 miles Thompson to Churchill, is the backbone of the service. The train provides the only public transportation thru the region—except for expensive and unreliable air services to some points. On this leg, the loadings were the highest. As if to underscore the differences, long layovers, seemingly not required by the road work, are scheduled at The Pas and Thompson, and the train has a different number north of Thompson.

Departure from Winnipeg was on time, and we eased our way along CN's double-track main line to Portage-la-Prairie. Altho this section has a passenger speed limit of 80mph, the 55 miles are scheduled in 80 minutes, and the dispatcher (despite the double track) managed to hold us up for a freight train and still get us into Portage early. At Portage the CN line divides into three separate routes (as well as being crossed by CP), and we took the middle one, leaving behind CN's now freight-only line to Saskatoon. Our route to Dauphin was in fact the old Canadian Northern, Canada's little-known third transcontinental line, running from Quebec City to Prince Rupert, and still used in a variety of places by passenger trains.

The rarity of full-service dining cars—there are only 12 trains with them in North America, half in Mexico—made a visit to the diner a special pleasure. Altho handled by only three men, who went all the way to Churchill and back, the car was a model of efficiency. Canada has done well in recent years in providing a full range of dining and lounge service with a small crew,as onthe Ontario Northland today and the CP Atlantic in recent years. The HUDSON BAY had not only full meal service, but also service at one's seat in the lounge. The dinner menu was different each of the four nights up and back, specials not on the menu were available, and several pies were baked fresh each day. It seems there is something for Amtrak to learn here:

surely the choice must not be limited to only tray-meal diners or stand-up snack bars. Granted passenger loads were never heavy, but the diner did a brisk business and was open all the time except in the middle of the night. Breakfast the day of arrival in Churchill began at 5:30am to insure all passengers had time for a leisurely meal. I was reminded of trips in the early 1960s on lesser-known trains in the days when full amenities were not limited to the major transcontinental services: Frisco's METEOR, KCS' SOUTHERN BELLE, and T&P's LOUISIANA EAGLE all used to provide the same kind of low-key yet friendly and efficient service.

As I sat at a dinner of pot roast and apple pie, a thunderstorm blew up and passed, and multiple rainbows appeared to the east as the sun set. The whole prairie was rich yellow, and every pond and swamp was filled with hundreds of Canada Geese returning north. The mellowness of the mood enhanced the unique pleasure of train travel.

The spring darkness fell as we stopped at Dauphin. Here a few passengers boarded, and an ominous steam line problem (which did not recur) was corrected. Sleep came easily and I woke up in The Pas, arriving a few minutes early. Here the sleeper practically emptied, leaving only four passengers, and only 11 in the coaches, for the long trip north. The 1½-hour layover, which saw no switching and only a few minutes' of head-end work, allowed a brisk walk around town before I returned to the diner for breakfast. Departure, with a crew of nine pulling 15 passengers, was on time at 8:30.

We crossed the Saskatchewan River on a long viaduct and swung northeast at Flin Flon Junction, where our route diverged from the route of the tri-weekly train between The Pas and Flin Flon. The the track became arrow-straight and level, surely the place for high-speed railroading. But no—our speed held steady at 40mph. It seems that because the roadbed is laid on permafrost, higher speeds are impossible.

Only four stops were made all day, including a 20-minute wait for time (no passengers) at the old division point of Wabowden. There was more express business than passenger business, and mysterious-looking crates and boxes were put off at every stop. One village received a new refrigerator. At every stop a dozen or more dogs would appear and head straight for the door of the diner, there to receive the scraps of the last meal. The scenery was little different from anywhere in the Canadian north: trees and lakes, relieved by lakes and trees.

"My second dinner on board brought forth a completely new menu and a choice of three flavors of fresh-baked pies."

At a few minutes after 2:00pm we reached the junction of Leven, beginning of the 31-mile Thompson Subdivision. We headed to the left up the subdivision, and in a little over an hour, after turning on a wye, backed into the station at Thompson, a remote mining center. Here was another stop of nearly two hours. In fact, this was the terminus of VIA 93 and the beginning of VIA 95. I had time to walk into the dusty town, over a mile from the station, but there was little to see. There was some switching: a second baggage car was added, and a refrigerator express, perhaps the last such run in North America. Nostalgic memories of 1950s railroading came to mind later that evening as I saw a milk truck back up to the train and receive a village's supply of dairy products.

At Thompson the sleeper filled up and coach load swelled to 60. A new operating crew also boarded, which would work all the way to Churchill, 13 hours, 45 minutes away. Then the same crew would return the same night to Gillam, another run of seven hours. The reason for these peculiar work assignments is both to eliminate crew layover, which could be for up to 48 hours because of the tri-weekly schedule, at obscure points such as Herchmer, where dormitory facilities and other amenities would have to be provided, and thus to allow the crew to spend most of its layover time at home. In addition, trains would not have to wait, and possibly freeze up, at one of these obscure points, waiting for a crew.

Departure from Thompson was again on time, and we returned down the Thompson Subdivision and headed north once again at Leven. My second dinner on board

brought forth a completely new menu and a choice of three flavors of fresh-baked pies. After dinner I noted that the terrain was changing. The ground was no longer level, and the trees were becoming steadily smaller. The line twisted and curved around hillocks and between lakes. At dusk we crossed the great Nelson River on a high viaduct. Large icebergs flowed down the river towards the Arctic.

Night brought sleep, and by morning we were in the bizarre wasteland of the Arctic desert, already described. Arrival at Churchill, after turning on the wye, was two minutes early at 6:58am.

I had been somewhat worried by the prospect of an 11-hour layover in Churchill, but there is an astonishingly large number of things to do. Parks Canada has a visitor center with exhibits and films, and there is also a civic museum. If the weather permits, there are a number of interesting walks possible. I walked out to Cape Merry at the mouth of the Churchill River—fighting my way thru waist-deep snow drifts—and looked across to Fort Prince of Wales, inaccessible across the frozen river. I then walked along the shore of Hudson's Bay; it was eerie to smell salt air but hear no surf or sea birds. The ice was pushed up in jagged bergs all along the shore, and for about a mile out to sea. The day was misty thruout, but the temperature was a typical 45 degrees.

On the second track at the Churchill station was the weekly mixed train 294, which I had once intended to take south. As I examined it, I was glad I had chosen otherwise; all day in a coach with wooden benches seemed an unnecessary hardship. No. 294 carried a single coach-combination at the end of about 20 freight cars. Instead, I returned wouth on the regular train, which left on time at 6pm. The return was as routine aa the northward trip, except for a freak snowstorm that hit in Saskatchewan, turning spring into blizzardy winter for an hour, and then passing as quickly as it had come.

Arrival back in Winnipeg was five minutes late because of another freight train delay coming into town. Like Alexander the Great, I had bittersweet feelings: a great accomplishment to have gone to the Arctic by train, but there were no more North American sleeping car lines left for me to ride for the first time.

(Mr. Roller says that since the trip described above, he has been told that the dining service has been reduced to the two entrees per meal found on the CANADIAN.)

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT (continued from page 8)

NEW YORK CITY Transit Authority could be saving up to $125 million per year if it revised work rules according to a 1982 arbitration ruling, the state comptroller's office said in late December.

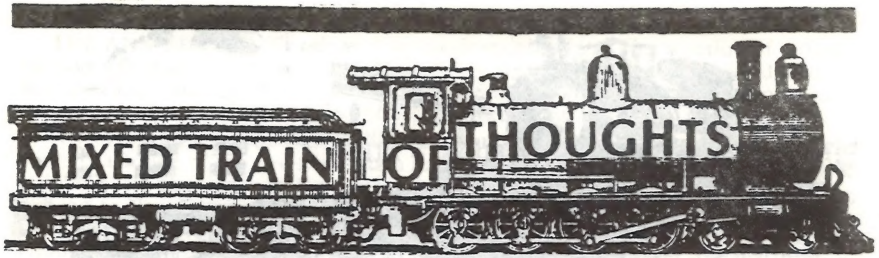
FREE TRAIN RIDES were offered by Chicago's RTA after 3pm on the following December dates: 10, 11, 17, 18 and 24. The free commuter fares were available on the Milwaukee Road, Rock Island, BN, C&NW and ICG Electric.

OXNARD COMMUTER TRAIN service, now suspended, was the subject of a 21-page decision served by the ICC on Dec 2. The ICC judge allowed the California PUC and Caltrans to appeal the question of whether the ICC has jurisdiction in the matter. This they did last May, and their joint appeal is still pending before the ICC. The ICC has granted an extension of time to appeal, to Jan 11. Also, Caltrans has filed, last Jan and again this Oct, a complaint seeking to have the ICC declare the SP's $588,200 per month tariff for the two weekday roundtrips unlawful. Last Sep 9 the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the District Court's dismissal of SP's contention that Federal law preempts the state Supreme Court's finding in favor of the PUC order requiring SP to run the trains for Caltrans.

THE HOUSTON METRO'S enthusiasm for rail transit is waning, according to a Nov 29 report. The transit agency is now looking at plans for only about 60 miles of rail lines, and about 100 miles of bus lanes.

LOS ANGELES SUBWAY officials on Dec 8 reversed an earlier vote and decided not to request Federal funds for construction of a Hollywood Bowl station on the forthcoming system. However, they agreed to seek local funding for the station and to retain the possibility of building it in system plans. Congressional figures were opposed to adding the station, which would cost about $75 million more, to the

(continued on page 20)



GREYHOUND BUS STRIKE ended after striking workers approved a new 3-year contract on Dec 19 under which they will take a 7.8% pay reduction. Full service was to resume Dec 21. The company was offering a one-third off discount coupon with each ticket. The coupons can be used between Jan 10 and Apr 1.....

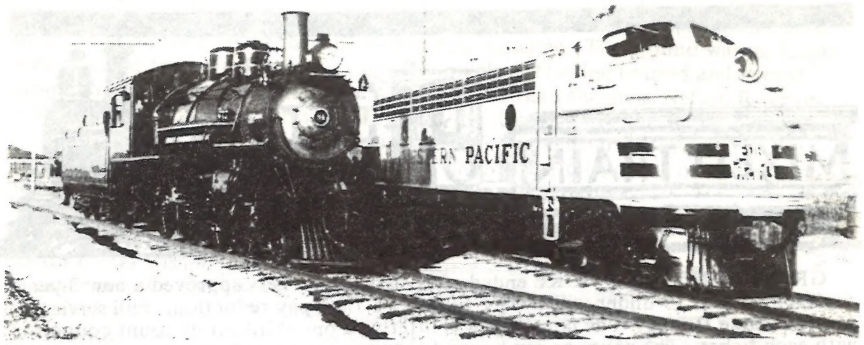
MASSIVE COLD WAVE hit the nation during the last half of December, starting Dec 16—the worst cold wave in the U.S. in 50 years. As year-end approached, more than 200 deaths had been attributed to the weather. Some Amtrak trains were running many hours late, and some were annulled. The heart of the problem with Amtrak seemed to be the Chicago facility, where equipment for the trains could not be readied quickly enough to maintain schedules. The problem, however, seemed not to be as severe as the winters in the mid-1970s, when Amtrak's steam -heated equipment was frozen up in the below-zero cold. The LAKE SHORE LIMITED was one train that was running many hours late over the Christmas weekend and into the following week. Train 448 due in at 11:50am on Dec 23 arrived at 8pm. A bus was run from Albany to Boston for the benefit of local passengers. On Dec 24 the same train, due into Pittsfield at 11:50am arrived at 10:05pm. On Dec 26 the same train reached Boston at 2:30am, due in the previous afternoon at 3:40pm. On Dec 27 train 448 was running about 4 hours late, an improvement from previous days. During most of these days, the New York section of the train was annulled at Albany in order to turn it faster, and a local train was run Albany-New York City. One news report said that on Dec 24 or 25, seven short distance trains out of Chicago were annulled in order to provide equipment for longer distance runs. The Northeast Corridor was shut down at Philadelphia the afternoon and evening of Dec 27 because of a fire in a dye factory near the Corridor main line. We have only sketchy details so far on the effects of the cold weather on Amtrak, and expect to bring you more details next issue. The cold wave was expected to continue into early January.....

★★★

COLORADO MIDLAND RAILWAY president Jim Jordan said in mid-December that his company must raise $60,000 by mid-January in order to start up rail passenger service in Wyoming, abandoned by Amtrak in the switch of trains 5 and 6 to the Rio Grande line. One report said that the withdrawal of a Texas investor left the railway short of cash. The company was vacated its offices on the third floor of Denver Union Station, and are "on hold" for at least 30 days, but the company's eight stockholders still believe that the service will work if the company can surmount the hurdle of needed cash. Jordan's plans are to operate from Denver to Greeley, Cheyenne, Ogden and Salt Lake City, with first-class cars using real linen and china, and staffed with typists, stenographer, beautician, barber, and offering wide-screen TV service.....

★★★

THE AUTO TRAIN suffered a record lateness of 4hrs, 10mins into Sanford FL on Dec 12. The two regular P30 locomotives were powering the train, so the problem seemed not to be a power failure. The train had 13 passenger cars and 14 auto carriers. This seemed to be the first time that two P30s had made a complete round trip, along with the cars—these were engines 724 and 700. From Dec 17 to 19, only one spare P30 was left at the Sanford terminal. On Dec 17, F40 engine 265 appeared on the train reaching Sanford, along with P30 no. 700. Then the northbound train of Dec 17 left with engines 705, 265 and 700, leaving only no. 711 at Sanford. On Dec 19, 700 and 714 arrived in Florida, and on Dec 20 one P30 was again at Sanford. There remain a baggage-dorm and an Amfleet II coach at Sanford from the damaged train 98, the METEOR that derailed on Nov 30. Amtrak has been doing wheel replacements at the Sanford AUTO TRAIN terminal. Cars 25080 and 28005 have been seen with all new wheel sets there.....



THE UNION PACIFIC recently donated a fully-restored F-type diesel locomotive, no. 917 from the Western Pacific, to the California Railway Museum at Rio Vista, for display and future operation. Alongside the engine in the photo above is ex-WP no. 94, which hauled WP's first passenger train to California in 1909. No. 94 is also owned by the museum. The F unit, refurbished and in its former orange and silver paint scheme, was presented to the museum Nov 16. It's one of the type of engines that pulled the CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR. Restoration was at UP's North Platte NE facility.....

OAKLAND TO RENO train has the support of Calif. Gov. Deukmejian, who wrote to Nevada Senator Paul Laxalt on Dec 9 saying that his administration would "be open to discussing new routes which have the potential to meet this [55%] statutory requirement." Deukmejian asked Laxalt to forward Amtrak's financial projections to Caltrans director Leo J. Trombatore. Amtrak has apparently not officially sent it projections to Laxalt yet. As reported in RTN 280, Amtrak projected the service would cover 56.5% of its costs.....

★★★

SOUTHERN PACIFIC CO. and Santa Fe Industries Inc. merged into a single corporation at 2:02pm Pacific Time Dec 23, two minutes after ICC approval was given. The two railroads, however, will remain separate for at least 31 more months while the ICC decides whether to permit their merger. The ICC is expected to do so. The Union Pacific earlier in December asked a federal judge to block the merger of the two railroads. Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the new company is John J. Schmidt, who held those titles at Santa Fe. The new company will be headquartered in Chicago.....

GRAND CENTRAL TERMINAL on Dec 16 & 17 was the scene of filming for the forthcoming Francis Ford Coppola movie "The Cotton Club." Portions of the terminal's lower level were made up to resemble departure gates for the 20TH CENTURY LIMITED and other New York Central trains. Privately owned cars "Clover Colony" and "Lehigh Valley 353" were used to represent a late-1920s 20TH CENTURY. The movie will star Richard Gere and Diane Lane, and concerns itself with a popular Harlem night club of the late 1920s.....

NEW AMTRAK MENUS in dining cars went into effect Dec 11. New dinner items offered are Boneless Breast of Chicken, Southern-Style, replacing Chicken Kiev; a Fisherman's Catch, featuring regional specialities, instead of the former Atlantic Seafood Platter; and a new Roast Boneless Loin of Pork and a Vegetable Lasagna. At lunch, besides the traditional soup and sandwich, are a new Shrimp Louie and Mexican Combo Plate. Ice cream, reintroduced with the last menu change, is now served either separately or a la mode with apple pie or a chocolate brownie. Most expensive menu item is a 10-ounce New York Strip Steak, grilled to order, for $10.25 at dinner. Least expensive is hot or cold cereal, served with milk or fruit juice, for $2 at breakfast. Waiters are now serving customers in the more traditional dining car manner, one course at a time, instead of bringing a whole meal on one tray.....

THE TEMPE, ARIZONA city council has approved expenditure of funds to provide for use of the old SP depot as a stop for the SUNSET LIMITED. This will be in addition to the Phoenix Union depot stop, and it will be unmanned. As soon as formal agreements are completed, the stop can be effective.....

OTTUMWA, IOWA STATION returned to daily staffing on Dec 19. At the end of October it had been reduced to five days per week staffing.....

THE ANN RUTLEDGE will get tray meals starting Jan 1, for a period of at least 60 days as a trial. NARP people in Kansas City got the experiment initiated, and NARP headquarters is asking riders of the train to buy the meals, and to report to them any instances of passengers not being informed on the meals' availability.....

NORTH HAVEN, CONNECTICUT has an unmanned pair of platforms and shelter, one on each side of the two-track main line. On Dec 20 in early afternoon, Amtrak train 468 left passengers on the platform there. An Amtrak maintenance person radioed to New Haven of the incident, and the conductor of the train radioed back that the person reporting the stranded passengers was wrong because 468 is a northbound train and they were on the southbound platform. However, the platform area carries no signs indicating which platform is for trains going in which direction. Both the operator and the conductor of 468, an RDC, were aware of the passengers, but made no effort to determine their destination nor to help them.....

SALE OF GASOLINE has been steadily declining since 1978, but in Aug 1983 the first upswing in sales occurred, with California leading the way with an increase of nearly 6% in Aug, over 7% in Sep, and about 8.5% in Oct. Overall, the nation's upsurge in gasoline use was a 4.7% increase in Aug from Aug 1982.....

★★★

NEW AMTRAK STATIONS: The Oceanside CA transportation center is almost complete, NARP reported in mid-December. Dedication of the station will be Jan 6. Actual use of the station was to start around Christmas, however. The new station is about 100 yards south of the old building. Construction has begun on a new Tacoma WA station, and completion is scheduled for next summer. This is being build with highway funds, part of a project which displaced access to the old station. The new Elko NV station came into use Dec 15, by the CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR. It consists of two buildings, one for each of the two tracks. This station was built with Federal funds, part of a track relocation project to move tracks out of the downtown.....

THE DESERT WIND gets a special fare promotion from Jan 1 thru Mar 31 on the L.A.-Las Vegas leg. A 5-day roundtrip fare can be purchased for the one-way price plus one dollar.....

A PASSENGER TRAIN derailed near Hwange, Zimbabwe on Dec 24 and fell into a ravine, killing 34 passengers and injuring about 60.....

FLORIDA RECEIVED $500,000 from the FRA Dec 13 to study the feasibility high-speed rail service in the Tampa-Orlando-Miami corridor.....

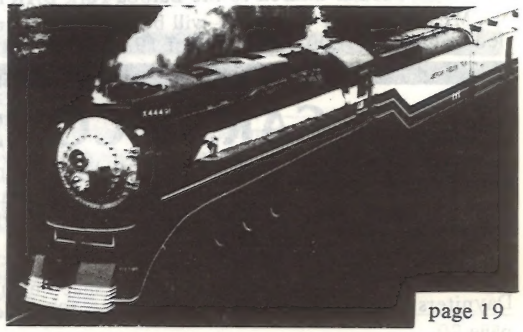
NEW ORLEANS WORLD'S FAIR will receive a visit from steamengine 8444, in addition to the 4449, after it opens next spring.....

TRACK REMOVAL BEGAN Dec 7 of the SP track between Lovers Point in Pacific Grove CA and the Monterey Bay Aquarium.....

THE RUMOR MILL: A report has it that the revived Oklahoma train is likely to run thru Tulsa, coming off the SOUTHWEST LIMITED at Kansas City and using a lot of the Frisco railroad to Dallas to connect with the EAGLE.....

MISSISSIPPI AND ALABAMA rail supporters are being urged by NARP to write their state legislators now to ask them to vote funds to support the GULF COAST LIMITED into the year 1985. Florida residents should urge legislators to vote money to extend the train from Mobile to Jacksonville at least, and preferably to a central Florida point.....

EX-SP STEAM ENGINE 4449 will visit the New Orleans World Fair in 1984 after an excursion from home base Portland, Oregon that will see stops in Sacramento May 6-7, San Francisco May 8-9, L.A. May 13-14, Phoenix May 17, El Paso May 20, Houston May 25-26, Dallas May 28-30, and other cities. New Orleans arrival will be Jun 2, where it will remain one week before starting a return trip. It arrives back in Portland Jun 24.....



SOME COMING EVENTS: NARP Region I (New England) meeting Sat, Feb 4 at Skyline Inn, Springfield MA, 711 Dwight St, two blocks N of Amtrak station, noon until about 6pm; featured speaker Joe F. Arcuri, Amtrak Empire Div. Dist. Manager, who will present Amtrak films made over the years. For further info, call Kevin Gregoire at 413-442-9345. On Jan 14 a citizens' meeting to promote commuter rail service for Northern Virginia will be held 10am-12:30 at the Lyceum, 201 S. Washington St, Alexandria VA. Call Walter Loftin, 703-836-8362. On Jan 11 a 24-hr marathon of bus, train, streetcar and ferry riding will begin, starting 11pm. Two riders are aiming to clock 400 miles in one day of riding regularly-scheduled Bay Area transit. Angelo Figone and Mich Pechner of San Francisco are being sponsored by Peninsula Rail 2000, a transit advocacy organization, which seeks to upgrade the Peninsula commute into a rapid rail mode. Phone Mike Pechner at 415-641-1211.....

THE WASHINGTON METRO opened its yellow line extension from National Airport to Alexandria & Fairfax Co., VA (5 miles) on Dec 17.....

Take notice of the fact that RTN published all 24 of its issues this year. Happy new year! News in this issue is updated thru Dec 28, 1983.

What's Doing at Beech Grove

A number of Superliner coaches were recently refitted with temporary snack bars. Now some of them are to be refitted with permanent snack bars, including microwave ovens to permit the sale of hot food. Those cars known to be on the permanent installation list are as follows: 34003, 34009, 34011, 34023, 34025, 34013, 34015 and 34019.

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT (continued from page 16)

system plans. On the same date, the Rapid Transit District board approved the final draft of an environmental impact statement. The draft leaves unanswered the question of whether the portion of the system in the San Fernando Valley will be built underground or above ground. The Federal DOT will make the final decision on that, but Valley residents are strongly opposed to an above-ground line.

VANCOUVER, B.C. TRANSIT SYSTEM now has on hand some 245 of its order of 250 new Flyer trolley coaches, and only a small number of Brill coaches dating from the early 1940 and late 1950s remain in service up to the Christmas season. Transit buffs will charter an old Brill for an excursion Jan 15, which is expected to close the book on Brill electric operations in the U.S. and Canada. The B.C. system has begun extension of trolley wire over a 2-mile segment from an existing trolley loop to the heart of the University of B.C. campus area. The move will allow fewer diesel buses in the city, freeing 30-40 of them for use on suburban routes.

CALTRAIN COMMUTE TRAIN line extension from Fourth & Townsend in San Francisco to the East Bay Terminal at First & Mission has been nixed by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (see last issue) in favor of extending S.F. Muni streetcar service from BART's Embarcadero Station to Fourth & Townsend, at a cost of $13 million. A second Muni extension was favored: bringing the J-Church line from 30th & Church to the Balboa Park BART station, at an $18.5-million cost.

MEXICO CITY SUBWAY will be extended 30 miles and bus routes will be doubled to number 9000 by the end of 1988, according to a Nov 15 announcement.

CARS & CONSISTS

*EMPIRE BUILDER, train 7, Seattle Dec 10: engines 310, 305; cars 1246, 39913, 34043, 38022, 32062. Same, train 8 (combined train), Spokane Dec 10: engines 329, 374; cars 1150, 39917, 34044, 34052, 38031, (Portland section:) 33017, 31043, 32029, (Seattle sleeper:) 32054.

*CANADIAN, VIA train 1, leaving Calgary Aug 28: engines unknown; cars 607 bag-dorm, coaches 110, 123, 3214 (with snack bar), 505 dome Skyline coffee shop, Dayniters 5710 & 5731, coach cafe lounge 3032, sleepers "Allan Manor", "Dunsmuir Manor", "Terra Nova River" (as dorm?), "Edwardsville", "Englee", "Erickson", diner 1367, sleepers "Chateau Roberval", "Cornwall Manor", "Butler Manor", dome sleeper-obs-lounge "Banff Park." (Compared with 1982 summer consist, car 3032 replaces a diner, and one sleeper has been cut.)

*AUTO TRAIN, train 52, Sanford FL Nov 26: engines 700, 714; cars 2467, 2442 "Cottonwood Grove", 2880 "Pacific Beauty", 2222, 2221, 2220, 25122, dome 9402, 3123 "General Lafayette", 8700, 8603, 8701, 25124, dome 9408, 25114, dome 9404, 25121, 25120; auto carriers 9008, 9000, 9007, 9108, 9106, 9117, 9114, 9118, 9100, 9115, 9120, 9102, 9105, 9101, 9111, 9103, 9110, 9107, 9112, 9113, 9116.

*CITY OF NEW ORLEANS, train 58, New Orleans Dec 5: engines 719, 259, 256; cars 1169, 2463, 28015, 4015, 4715, 4632, 10502, 10501. (Nos. 719, 259, 10502 and 10501 to be cut off in Macomb MS for HEP training of crews.)

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"In answer to the question you propounded to your readers in the *The Sun/Daily Herald* of Dec. 3, 'Will you ride the train?' (that is, Amtrak to New Orleans) my answer to this hypothetical and pathetical query is I will definitely not ride in an Amtrak train. I have said it before. I have written letters to the newspapers opposing Amtrak's runs, and I will say it again and again!

"Amtrak is jinxed. Someone coined s slogan 'Amtrak goes *off* the track': that states the case in five economical words.

"Look at the signals: Amtrak has had a long and fateful history of accidents about the countryside at large. Only this past July, Amtrak had one of its worst accidents—it was derailed at Wilmington, Ill., and 51 passengers were injured; a passenger on that train remarked he 'never saw such total wreckage before.' "

"If I were to go to the World's Fair, I would travel in a horse-drawn vehicle rather than board an Amtrak coach"...

—Letter by Mrs. A. M. Dalche of Gulfport MS to Gulfport MS *Sun/Daily Herald* Dec 10.

"Imagine that an airline crash killed nearly 140 people every day of the year in the United States. That is the toll exacted by automobiles, cited today by The Consumer Federation of America as the most dangerous consumer product sold...

"The list of 10 most hazardous items cites cars as the one 'most likely to kill or injure us,' noting that nearly 50,000 Americans die in auto accidents annually..."

—Picayune (MS) Item, Dec 8.

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB***

"Although Scranton has not had rail passenger service since the late 1950s, when the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad Co. discontinued the Phoebe Snow, which passed through on its run from Hoboken, N.J. to Chicago, the city once served as a hub for six railroads."

—Martha Woodall in Philadelphia Inquirer, Nov 27.

(The PHOEBE SNOW ended in Nov 1966, and the last train into Scranton was the eastbound LAKE CITIES on Jan 5, 1970. And was it really a "hub" for six railroads?)

RAIL FANTRIPS

Feb 4: Private car LV 353 "Black Diamond" visits South Florida.Miami-Tampa RT open to public. Limit 16 guests. Champagne breakfast, cocktails, candlelit dinner. $235. On SILVER PALM. Lehigh Black Diamond Ltd, David L Ross, 300 Winston Dr, no. 2020, Cliffside Park NJ 07010.

Feb 25: Central Vermont excursion: Lv Boston S. Sta 8am to New London, then on Central Vermont to Brattleboro VT, back via Palmer MA & ex-B&A thru Worcester & Framingham. Amfleet cars. $39. Mass. Bay RR Enthusiasts Inc., PO Box 525, Bedford MA 01730.

Send large SASE when responding to listings. One Rail Fantrips listing is free. Send info to: RAIL TRAVEL NEWS, Fantrips Dept, PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

RTN ADVERTISING RATES

Express Ads cost just $1.00 per line of 80 spaces. Display ads are only $1.25 per square inch. Send your order to: **RAIL TRAVEL NEWS, PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.**

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EXPRESS ADS

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DINING CAR CHINA, glasses, silver, cloth. Timetables, guides, stationery, rules, metal & Pullman items, annual reports. Many railroads. Long 37¢ stamped envelope brings list. J. McClellan, 1752 S. Wichita, Wichita, KS 67213. Will buy items.

GISELLE'S TRAVEL CORP at 1215 4th St. Sacramento CA 95814, Phone: (916) 446-1211 offers rail tickets on AMTRAK–VIA (CANADA)–EURAILPASS along with tours and accommodations in cities to which you are traveling. Let Giselle's help you take your next memorable rail trip.

COME! Ride the railways of the world with "The International Railway Traveler." IRT is a unique, bimonthly mini-magazine which explores modern rail travel world-wide, from Spain to Siberia, Norway to New Zealand. Regular subscription is $15; $10 special, limited-time offer to NARP and Transport 2000 members. Sample copy $2.50. Write IRT, Dept R, P.O. Box 35067, Louisville, KY 40232. (502) 456-1028.

OFFICIAL Ass'n of Railway Museums First Day of Issue cover, with 4 streetcar stamps, $2.00 each. Also, special Oct. 1st Street Railway Post Office cancellation, Trolley Station Kennebunkport ME with Transportation series stamps, $1.25 each. Send SASE to Ass'n of Railway Museums, P.O. Box 3454, Portland, ME 04104.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA RAILROADS: THE SILVER AGE, 1945-1960, by Fred Matthews. Photographic history of the era when interurbans, steam and streamliners overlapped in a rich tapestry of rail operations. Vol. I includes electrics, standard pass. trains, Valley, Sierra, desert. 224pp, 48 full color, 160 b&w, maps; 8½x11. $32 at bookstores or from Sundance Publications, 250 Broadway, Denver CO 80203.

WHAT IS the AMTRAK board's legal authority for their refusal to comply with the audit, account & obligation provisions of secs. 9105 to 9108, title 31, UNITED STATES CODE?

WHAT IS the purpose of the AMTRAK board of directors denying that AMTRAK is a "Government controlled corporation" as defined in sec. 103, title 5, UNITED STATES CODE?

UNDER WHAT legal authority can the AMTRAK board declare that AMTRAK is not an "Executive agency" under section 105 of title 5 of the UNITED STATES CODE?

Since "Government corporations" are not excepted by 5 U.S.C. 551(1)(A) to (H), why does the AMTRAK board deny that AMTRAK is an "agency" under subch. II of chap. 5, title 5?

THE BEST OF HOLLAND AFLOAT: MAIDEN PACIFIC VOYAGE of Holland America Line's ms NOORDAM June 2, 1984, LA-SF-Victoria, Prince Rupert, Alert Bay to Vancouver. Relive the splendor of the transatlantic era aboard the newest ship in the world. All inside rooms $749, all outside rooms $849. Fares, good from LA or SF, include accommodations, meals, entertainment, etc. Optional Amtrak package home. Space is limited–call now to reserve your space. KEY TOURS INTERNATIONAL, Henry J. Luna/Christopher A. Kyte, 1510 Parkside Dr, Suite 100, Walnut Creek CA 94596, (415) 945-8687 or from SF 788-2074.

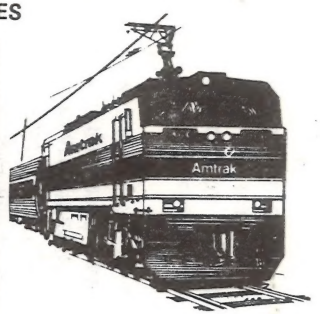
WANTED: Information as to the status of the Chicago's Rail Transit to O'Hara Airport. Have heard that construction has been stopped. Clinton O. Larson, Box 611, La Crosse, Wisconsin 54601.

"Issues in American Rail Travel," RTN's little book on important problems with America's rail passenger revival, is almost ready for publication. Price will be $4.50, which includes relevant tax & post. Full details will be given later in RTN. PO Box 9007 Berkeley CA 94709

AMTRAK RIDERSHIP FIGURES

OCTOBER 1983 FIGURES

NORTHEAST CORRIDOR	OCT 1983	PERCENT CHANGE
METROLINERS	99,084	12.7
NORTHEAST CORRIDOR CONVENTIONAL	470,147	(6.0)
NEW ENGLAND METROS	6,237	6264.3
NEW HAVEN-SPRINGFIELD	20,422	9.6
NEW YORK-PHILADELPHIA	198,710	23.6
PHILADELPHIA-HARRISBURG	63,378	(2.2)
NEW YORK-HARRISBURG	23,828	(4.7)
TOTAL NORTHEAST CORRIDOR	881,806	2.8
SHORT DISTANCE		
NEW YORK-ALBANY-NIAGARA FALLS	66,369	7.1
CHICAGO-ST.LOUIS	20,244	(4.0)
CHICAGO-MILWAUKEE	11,793	5.0
CHICAGO-DETROIT-TOLEDO	30,284	10.2
CHICAGO-CARBONDALE	12,243	(2.2)
CHICAGO-QUINCY	6,498	11.1
LOS ANGELES-SAN DIEGO	77,324	2.6
SEATTLE-PORTLAND	7,465	108.5
WASHINGTON-MARTINSBURG	11,878	(31.3)
OAKLAND-BAKERSFIELD	16,199	28.7
NEW YORK-MONTREAL	6,163	3.2
CHICAGO-PORT HURON-TORONTO	8,558	23.3
MINNEAPOLIS-DULUTH	9,264	86.7
CHICAGO-VALPARAISO	15,902	(20.5)
CHICAGO-INDIANAPOLIS	5,183	18.4
CHICAGO-KANSAS CITY	10,279	12.1
PHILADELPHIA-PITTSBURGH	7,650	(3.8)
LOS ANGELES-SACRAMENTO		(100.0)
MIAMI-TAMPA	3,599	.0
TOTAL SHORT DISTANCE	326,895	4.5
LONG DISTANCE		
WASHINGTON-MONTREAL	7,453	(22.0)
NEW YORK-FLORIDA	40,916	11.0
CHICAGO-NEW YORK/WASHINGTON	19,016	(10.4)
CHICAGO-CIN-WAS-NEW YORK	4,789	(17.9)
CHICAGO-SEATTLE/PORTLAND	29,331	1.9
CHICAGO-OAKLAND	33,097	33.4
CHICAGO-LOS ANGELES	15,796	(27.6)
CHICAGO-NEW ORLEANS	11,965	(5.6)
CHICAGO-TEXAS	6,241	.0
LOS ANGELES-NEW ORLEANS	4,831	(22.9)
LOS ANGELES-SEATTLE	30,249	1.4
CHICAGO-NEW YORK/BOSTON	26,616	(8.1)
BOSTON-NEWPORT NEWS	5,547	6.8
NEW YORK-SAVANNAH	8,462	(6.4)
SEATTLE/SLC-CHICAGO	9,516	1.1
NEW YORK-NEW ORLEANS	18,774	7.5
LOS ANGELES/SLC-CHICAGO	8,759	(14.6)
AUTO-TRAIN (LOR-SFA)	,462	.0
TOTAL LONG DISTANCE	281,820	(.8)
SPECIAL TRAINS	19,550	265.8
SYSTEM TOTAL	1.510.071	3.4



Here are the latest ridership figures released by Amtrak. (For the September figures, see RTN 280.)

The first column gives ridership counts, while the second column gives percentage change from October, 1982.

Overall, patronage was up 3.4 per cent from October, 1982, a rather unexciting increase. The poorest-performing category was long distance trains, which were down 0.8 per cent from last year. About half of the long distance trains showed decreases, ranging from 6.4% to 27.6%. The one outstanding increase in the long distance category was on the CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR, which was up 33.4%. Most of this increase was evidently due to heavy travel on the Denver-Glenwood Springs portion of the route, as mentioned in our last issue.

In the long distance category, note that AUTO TRAIN appears for the first time, as the train operated for one day in October, and officially carried 462 passengers on its first run.

In the NE Corridor category, the New England Metros operated for just one day in October 1982, and carried 98 passentgers. Therefore, the 1983 comparison, when they carried 6,237 riders, works out to an enormous percentagewise increase.

There is no comparison month for the Miami-Tampa train, as it began operation Nov 21, 1982.